

Message Text

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17

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SUBJ: PROSPECTIVE CENTRAL CABINET RESHUFFLE

REF: ISLAMABAD 9442

SUMMARY: REPLACEMENT OF SIND CHIEF MINISTER HAS GIVEN RISE TO RENEWED SPECULATION ABOUT CHANGES IN CENTRAL GOVERNMENT. THREE PRESENT MINISTERS ARE SLATED TO LOSE PORTFOLIOS UNDER CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS WHILE OTHER INCUMBENTS MAY HAVE PORTFOLIOS CHANGED. THESE SHIFTS NOT LIKELY TO BE OF PARTICULAR SIGNIFICANCE PER SE, AS BHUTTO MAINTAINS CAREFUL GEOGRAPHIC AND IDEALOGICAL MIX IN CENTRAL CABINET. MORE INTERESTING IS PROSPECT FOR PEOPLES PARTY CONSTITUTION PROMISED BY MARCH. END SUMMARY.

1. REPLACEMENT OF CHIEF MINISTER IN SIND PROVINCE (KARACHI 2613) HAS REVIVED SPECULATION ON CHANGES IN CENTRAL GOVERNMENT CABINET. LAW AND PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS MINISTER PIRZADA ADDED TO RUMOR-MONGERING BY TELLING PRESS WHAT HAS BEEN TAKEN FOR GRANTED FOR WEEKS: THAT MINISTER SHERPAO WILL BECOME CHIEF MINISTER OF NORTH WEST FRONTIER AND MORAJ KHALID, FORMER CHIEF MINISTER OF PUNJAB, WILL

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JOIN CENTER. BHUTTO HAS DECLINED TO COMMENT ON SPECULATION

OTHER THAN TO POINT OUT THAT CHANGES MUST BE EFFECTED BY MID-FEBRUARY UNDER CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISION REQUIRING CENTRAL AND PROVISIONAL MINISTERS TO HOLD APPROPRIATE ELECTIVE OFFICES IN ORDER RETAIN THEIR POSITIONS. SPEAKING TO PRESS, BHUTTO DOWNPLAYED SIGNIFICANCE OF SHIFT IN SIND AND OF FORTHCOMING CHANGES, SAYING THAT PERIODIC MINISTERIAL CHANGES WERE ROUTINE IN PAKISTAN AS ELSEWHERE.

2. WITH JATOR'S TRANSFER TO SIND, CENTRAL CABINET IS NOW COMPOSED OF FOURTEEN MINISTERS AND MINISTERS OF STATE GEOGRAPHICALLY DIVIDED AMONG PUNJAB (5), SIND AND FRONTIER (2 EACH), FORMER EAST PAKISTAN (2), BALUCHISTAN, FEDERAL CAPITAL, AND TRIBAL AREAS (1 EACH). ASIDE FROM SHERPAO, TWO OTHER MINISTERS ARE NOT MEMBERS OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OR SENATE: MAHMUD ALI, A BENGALEE, AND RAISANI OF BALUCHISTAN.

3. RAISANI, AS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED, MAY WIND UP IN BALUCHISTAN PROVINCIAL CABINET, DEPENDING ON BREAK IN STALEMATED POLITICAL SITUATION IN THAT PROVINCE, OR PERHAPS BE SENT ABROAD AS AMBASSADOR. MAHMUD ALI WILL PROBABLY BE GIVEN SINECURE FOR FAITHFUL SERVICES RENDERED. GENERALLY BELIEVED THAT MUNTAZ BHUTTO, JUST RELIEVED OF SIND CHIEF-MINISTERSHIP, MAY JOIN CABINET ALONG WITH MIRAJ KHALID. SPECULATION CONTINUES THAT SOME INCUMBENTS WILL ALSO BE SHIFTED TO DIFFERENT PORTFOLIOS.

4. WE EXPECT BHUTTO WILL SEEK TO MAINTAIN MORE OR LESS EXISTING GEOGRAPHIC BALANCE IN CABINET WHICH, IF STRICTLY FOLLOWED, COULD RESULT IN TWO NEW SINDHI APPOINTEES AND AT LEAST ONE EACH FROM FRONTIER AND BALUCHISTAN. CABINET COULD EASILY BE EXPANDED, HOWEVER, SINCE NUMBER OF MINISTERS ALREADY HOLD TWO OR MORE WIDELY-DIFFERING PORTFOLIES. ADDITIONALLY, BHUTTO REPORTEDLY PLANNING TO CREATE A NEW ISLAMIC AFFAIRS MINISTRY. HE WILL UNDOUBTEDLY KEEP SOME IF NOT ALL OF MINISTERS PUBLICLY IDENTIFIED WITH PPP LEFTWING--RAHIM, MUBESHIR HASAN, KHURSHID HASAN MEER, AND SHEIKH RASHID. KHALID WILL BE FURTHER ADDITION TO LEFTISTS.

5. WHAT ALL THIS AMOUNTS TO MAY TURN OUT TO BE, AS BHUTTO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SAYS, OF VERY LITTLE SIGNIFICANCE. DESPITE CLEAVAGE BETWEEN SELF-STYLED SOCIALISTS AND TRADITIONALISTS WITHIN PEOPLES PARTY, ALMOST ALL PARTY LUMINARIES ACKNOWLEDGE THEIR OBEISANCE TO BHUTTO AND RECOGNIZE THAT THEIR PRESENT POWERS STEM LARGELY FROM THEIR ASSOCIATION WITH HIM. AS WE PREVIOUSLY INDICATED, WE FORESEE LITTLE CHANGE IN GENERALLY SPOTTY MINISTERIAL PERFORMANCES RESULTING FROM ANTICIPATED CABINET RESHUFFLE.

6. OF PROBABLY GREATER SIGNIFICANCE IS PPP PROMISE TO
DRAW UP CONSTITUTION FOR PARTY BY MARCH 1974 TO REPLACE
PRESENT PARTY MANIFESTO AS GUIDELINE FOR PARTY POLICY.
CONSTITUTION, IF ACTUALLY PRODUCED, SHOULD PROVIDE USEFUL
INDICATORS OF BHUTTO REGIME'S FUTURE INTENTIONS.
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